

advised to take action to control the activities of the insurgent groups and have been given all feasible help by the Central Government in this regard.

Waste and Fallow Lands

* 806. DR. P. VALLAL PERUMAN:
SHRI ARJUN SINGH YADAV:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the approximate area of waste and fallow lands in the country;

(b) the steps taken/proposed to be taken to bring these lands under cultivation in order to increase the agricultural production;

(c) whether the Government propose to give these lands to the landless poor and weaker sections of the society on lease basis for cultivation purpose; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN): (a) The estimated area of wastelands in the country is about 129.58 million ha.; the extent of fallows, including current fallows is about 29.6 million ha.

(b) to (d): The assignment of Government lands for cultivation and other purposes falls under the purview of the State Governments and subject to policies and guidelines laid down by them for this purpose. So far about 4.17 million ha. of Government wastelands in the country have been distributed to the landless rural poor, weaker sections of the society and ex-servicemen.

For the development of waste and fallow lands with assignees of ceiling surplus

land and SC/ST beneficiaries to whom their alienated lands has been restored, the Central Government provides assistance.

Improvement of the productivity of degraded lands is one of the thrusts in the following schemes and projects in operation:-

(i) Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Soil Conservation in the Catchments of River Valley Projects;

(ii) Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Integrated Watershed Management in the Catchments of Flood Prone Rivers;

(iii) National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas;

(iv) Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Reclamation of Alkali Soils in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana;

(v) EEC assisted projects of Reclamation of ravenous areas in Uttar Pradesh and Integrated watershed management in Gujarat;

(vi) Desert development Programme; and

(vii) Soil Conservation and watershed Management programmes under State sector.

Telephone Facility to Gram Panchayats

*807. SHRI BHAGEY GOBARDHAN:
Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of gram panchayats in the country, which are already linked with telephones, State-wise/Union Territory-wise;

(b) the year-wise programme for provid-